

Department of Veterans' Services
Attn: Women Veterans' Network
239 Causeway Street, Suite 100
Boston, MA 02114

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Eighteenth Annual Women Veterans' Luncheon

You are invited to attend the 18th Annual Women Veterans' Luncheon, to be held on **Sunday, October 19, 2003**, at Lombardo's on Route 28 in Randolph. The day's events include a health fair, jewelry sale, raffle, lunch, and a keynote address. The luncheon begins at noon. Fish or chicken are the menu choices and the meal is \$18.00. To avoid being closed out of this popular event, buy your tickets by October 15, 2003.

For more information, contact Lillian J. Eaton at 978-388-1728. To purchase a ticket, mail your check or money order, payable to "Women Veterans Committee," to Bernice Ethier, 10 Montello St. Ext., Brockton, MA 02301-7101. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for your tickets to be mailed to you. No tickets will be sold at the door.

Governor Appoints Tom Kelley to Secretary

Governor Romney appointed DVS Commissioner Tom Kelley to the position of Secretary of Veteran's Services. By raising this job to a Cabinet post, the Governor sends a strong signal that veterans matter and deserve a seat at the table.

Requesting Documents from the National Personnel Records Center

Do you need a replacement DD Form 214? Would you like to obtain your mother's or father's military personnel records? Requesting these documents just got easier.

The National Personnel Record Center (NPRC) provides copies of documents from military personnel records to authorized requesters. Veterans and their next of kin can request military personnel records such as Replacement DD Forms 214 (Separation Document).

NPRC has improved its methods for requesting documents by creating a web-based application that provides better service on these requests by eliminating mailroom-processing time. Since the requester will be prompted to supply all information essential for processing, delays that occur when NPRC must go back to the requester for more information will be minimized. Note that the online request process should be used instead of Standard Form 180 for requests from the veteran or the veteran's next of kin.

Visit <http://vetrecs.archives.gov> to fill out an online application. NPRC's phone number is 314-801-0800.

* VA HOLIDAY LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM *

I will attend the VA Women Veterans' Holiday Luncheon on Sunday, November 30, 2003, at the USS Jacob Jones VFW, Post 2017, Dedham, MA.

Catered Lunch at \$13.00 per person: Chicken Soup, Salad, Family Style Turkey Dinner with All the Fixin's, Rolls, Coffee/Tea, and Dessert. **OR** Vegetarian Dinner.

Name: _____ **Vet: Y N** **Guests:** _____ **Vet: Y N**

Address: _____ " _____

City/State: _____ " _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ for _____ Turkey Dinners @ \$13.00 each.

\$ _____ for _____ Vegetarian Dinners @ \$13.00 each.

Make checks payable to: **Women Veterans' Healthcare**

Mail this form with your check to: Jeri Rumsis, Women Veterans' Healthcare Committee (116A)

Boston VA Healthcare System

940 Belmont St. Brockton, MA 02301

DEADLINE NOVEMBER 11, 2003

4th Annual Holiday Luncheon and Information Fair



*Dr. Irene
Trowell-
Harris*

The Women Veterans' Healthcare Programs of the Boston VA Healthcare System will host the **4th Annual Holiday Luncheon and Information Fair** for women veterans and their guests on **Sunday, November 30, 2003**, at the USS Jacob Jones VFW, Post 2017, Eastern Avenue in Dedham, MA. The Information Fair will begin at 10:00 a.m. and the Holiday Luncheon at noon.

Guest speaker will be **Maj.Gen. Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris (Ret.)**, Director of the VA Center for Women Veterans. Dr. Trowell-Harris is the primary advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on programs and issues related to women veterans. A recipient of the Air Force Distinguished Service and Legion of Merit awards, Dr. Trowell-Harris was the first African American female in the history of the National Guard to be promoted to general officer.

Holiday spirit will be the order of the day with special gifts presented to women veterans in uniform and those presenting their VA cards. Reserve early, this has been a sell-out luncheon the past two years. Contact Jeri Rumsis (508-583-4500, Ext. 3133), Pat Robinson (617-232-9500, Ext. 4120), or Diane Harness-DiGloria (508-583-4500, Ext. 1435) with questions.

VA To Fill Prescriptions by Non-VA Physicians

WASHINGTON – Some veterans waiting to see Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) physicians for the first time may be eligible to receive prescriptions written by non-VA physicians until a veteran's first primary care appointment with VA, under a new policy. This new benefit will start on September 22, 2003. VA will provide all prescriptions by mail. VA may also bill veterans' health insurance. Some veterans may be required to pay a copayment based on their eligibility and financial status.

To be eligible for the new benefit, veterans must meet all of the following conditions: (1) Have enrolled in VA health care before July 25, 2003, and; (2) Requested their first primary care appointment with VA before July 25, 2003, and; (3) Must be waiting more than 30 days for their first appointment with a primary care physician on September 22, 2003.

VA will mail letters to all eligible veterans by September 6, 2003. The letters will include detailed instructions on how to use this benefit, and will include a letter for veterans to give to their non-VA doctor.

For more information on the VA Transitional Pharmacy Benefit call the VA's Health Benefits Service Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit the VA online at www.va.gov/elig/PharmNews.htm.

*Source: Department of Veterans Affairs, News Release
July 24, 2003*

-VA Updates -

Preparing Veterans for Employment and Independent Living

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Division, Boston, provides services to assist veterans with service-connected disabilities in achieving their occupational goals. In Boston, Worcester, and Springfield, Massachusetts locations, the VA helps approximately 1,700 service-disabled veterans annually prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment, or achieve improvement in independent daily living. The VA provides services that can include: vocational testing, counseling, and planning; on-the-job training; educational training such as two- or four-year degree programs if needed; supportive rehabilitation services and counseling; and assistance in finding and keeping a job, including incentives for employers.

To receive Chapter 31 services, a veteran must meet two criteria: eligibility—defined as having an honorable or other than dishonorable military discharge, and a service-connected disability rating of 10% or more and entitlement. Entitlement is defined as having impairment to finding and holding a job because of a service-connected disability, which results in an employment handicap.

As for women veterans without a service-connected disability, but who are eligible for VA Education programs, they may apply to VR&E in Boston for vocational-educational counseling.

Veterans can access applications online www.vba.va.gov/vre.htm, by phone 1-800-827-1000, or by visiting the VA Regional Office, JFK Federal Building, Government Center, Boston, MA 02203.

By Ruth Comeau, VR&E Officer

A Home for Women and Children

Five homeless, disabled women veterans and their children are one step closer to having their own space at least until they are ready to transition back into society. This milestone is the work of the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services and a dedicated committee comprised of Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) representatives, City of Brockton representatives, and non-profit agencies. The VA recently announced that Massachusetts Veterans' Inc., the agency that has agreed to lead the project, will receive \$100,000 toward construction.

The site of this home is a building on the property of the Brockton VA Medical Center Campus.

The idea for the home for women and children began in 2001 when women veteran advocates and social workers found it difficult to find housing for women veterans and their children. This home will fill a desperate need since very few shelters accept women veterans *and* their children.

The VA's Vet Center Program Offers Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma



Jen Erbe-Leggett & Bonnie Roessner are counselors for the Vet Centers

Since 1992, the VA's Vet Centers have offered specialized therapeutic treatment to women (and men) of all eras who suffered a military sexual trauma (MST). The VA recognizes that many veterans have been victims of sexual assault or harassment while serving on active duty, and that these traumas have left a significant impact on the veterans' lives.

The MST therapists at the Vet Centers are sensitive to this and to the fact that many veterans may not have spoken about these traumas to anyone. Consequently, the VA does not require that the veteran have reported the sexual trauma when it occurred or at any other time. Vet Center therapists understand the feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, anger, and embarrassment that victims may experience related to their trauma, and can help them regain their confidence, self-esteem, and quality of life. The Vet Centers provide free counseling and related referrals to eligible veterans in a community-based setting. The Vet Centers maintain absolute confidentiality of clients' records and not even other departments within the VA can gain access.

These services are a part of an array of treatment options available within the VA system to veterans who have encountered MST. Jen Erbe-Leggett, LICSW, and Bonnie Roessner, LICSW, are the Sexual Trauma Counselors at the Boston and Brockton Vet Centers, and are eager to help you find the treatment setting that is best for you and your needs. If you have any questions about these services or would like to make an appointment or a referral please contact Bonnie or Jen at 617-424-0665.

By Jen Erbe-Leggett, LICSW, and Bonnie Roessner, LICSW, Sexual Trauma Counselors



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

New Bill to Broaden State's Definition of Veteran



Sen. Susan C. Tucker authored SB 822, which redefines "veteran"

Current Massachusetts law defines "veteran" based on military service within certain time periods when the United States was engaged in combat. With few exceptions, those who served between 1975-1990 are presently not considered "veterans." This definition leaves a large number of women (and men) who served in the military outside the realm of state veterans' benefits.

Senator Susan C. Tucker authored a bill that will redefine "veteran" to eliminate wartime service requirements. The bill also classifies as veterans those members of the National Guard and Reserve who are called to active duty and have the required wartime service. This comprehensive bill is long-awaited and much-needed to recognize all Massachusetts men and women who serve honorably in the military.

Senate Bill 822 (SB 822), "An Act Amending the Definition of a Veteran" has received favorable review from the Joint Committee on Health and Human Services. Please contact your state senator and representative to let them know you support SB 822. Write or call your legislators today and encourage them to vote favorably on SB 822.

To find out who your elected officials are, visit www.wheredoivotema.com or call the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Citizen Information Service, 617-727-7030 or 1-800-392-6090 (toll-free in Massachusetts only).

For more information on "An Act Amending the Definition of a Veteran" call Heidi Kruckenberg at the Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services at 617-727-3578, Ext. 316.

Women at Work Museum Honors the Achievements of Women

The Women at Work Museum will open October 18, 2003, at 35 County Street in Attleboro, Massachusetts. The mission of the Women at Work Museum is to honor the achievements of women throughout history; to provide educational programs that promote leadership, economic independence, and interest in math, science, engineering and technology; and to recognize the efforts of individuals and organizations that support equality in education and the workplace.

From June to September 2004, the Museum's theme will be "Leaders in Peace and War," which will recognize the honorable service of women in times of peace and war. The Museum is being developed in conjunction with the Massachusetts National Guard Museum, Massachusetts Military Historical Society, VA Boston Health Care System, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America-Post 837, the Veterans Upward Bound/UMass Boston, and the Massachusetts Women Veterans' Network.

Each year a national call for photographs will produce a new array of images of women at work. Exhibits, speakers, and events will reflect a particular theme and involve participants in experiences that are informative and engaging. A collection of artifacts, including photographs and narratives, will illustrate the achievements of women throughout history.

If you would like information about the Leaders in Peace and War exhibit or would like to be a member of the planning committee, contact Pat Robinson at 617-232-9500, Ext. 4120. If you would like Women at Work Museum membership information, contact Katherine Honey at 508-226-0325, khoney@comcast.net or visit www.womenatworkmuseum.com.

By Katherine Honey, President, Women at Work Museum